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Note verbale dated 15 September 2015 to the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development from the Permanent Mission of Peru to the international organizations in Geneva

The Permanent Mission of Peru to the international organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the secretariat of the Trade and Development Board of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and has the honour to enclose herewith Note No. 1-M-N/101, addressed to the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, on the subject of the fourteenth session of UNCTAD.

The Permanent Mission of Peru would appreciate having the above-mentioned note translated into all the official languages of the United Nations and circulated among the States members of UNCTAD as soon as possible. It would also appreciate having the note included as a working document under items 8 (a) and (b) of the agenda for the sixty-second session of the Trade and Development Board.

The Permanent Mission of Peru to the international organizations in Geneva takes this opportunity to extend the assurances of its highest consideration to the secretariat of the Trade and Development Board of UNCTAD.

Geneva, 15 September 2015

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The Permanent Mission of Peru to the international organizations in Geneva presents its compliments to the Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and has the honour to refer to the fourteenth session of UNCTAD, which was scheduled to take place from 14 to 18 March 2016 in Lima, Peru.

In this regard, the Permanent Mission of Peru regrets to inform the Office of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD that, owing to circumstances of force majeure, it will not be possible to hold the fourteenth session of UNCTAD in Peru as planned and as desired by the Government of Peru. The difficult decision to refrain from hosting the fourteenth session of UNCTAD has been taken due to an exceptional and unforeseen set of circumstances, namely the severe impact which El Niño is predicted, based on hard scientific evidence, to have in early 2016.

The impact of this phenomenon has been duly assessed by the Government of Peru in the light of its commitments with the Conference and, in view of the responsibilities that derive from those commitments, the Government has made every effort to find a way to honour its offer to serve as the host country for the fourteenth session. Nevertheless, the forecasts of the impact of this extraordinary El Niño event have shifted from "moderate" to "severe" in the space of just a few months, and the Government of Peru has therefore been obliged to take all precautions within its power as a matter of urgency in order to shield the population's health, the economy and the environment from this event's negative effects.

The severe impacts that natural events can have on Peru are attested to by the similar events that occurred during the southern-hemisphere summers of 1982-1983 and 1997-1998. The consequences of those phenomena for the economy, the country's infrastructure and its population's health were devastating. The 1982-1983 event occasioned US$ 3.283 billion in damage, affected the lives of 1,267,720 persons, with 587,120 of them being left homeless, wiped out crops and communication lines and seriously damaged health-care facilities, schools and other buildings. The 1997-1998 El Niño event affected 23 of the country's 24 departments, caused an estimated US$ 3.5 billion in damage and the loss of some 30 hydropower plants, destroyed over 200 bridges, 42,000 homes and 6,000 km of roads, ruined 73,000 ha of crops and left a range of diseases and epidemics in its wake.

In view of these experiences, the Government of Peru finds it necessary to act promptly to meet its responsibilities in preparing for an El Niño event that is predicted to have a more severe impact than any other such event has had in the past century.

This drastic turn of events makes it impossible to ensure that the country would be able to host an international conference as large and as important as the fourteenth session of UNCTAD. The Government of Peru is therefore obliged to take this unavoidable decision in order to ensure that the session can proceed smoothly in another location. The Government of Peru deeply regrets any inconvenience that this urgent and exceptional decision may cause and appeals to the States members of the Conference and to the Secretariat for their understanding.

The Permanent Mission of Peru to the international organizations in Geneva takes this opportunity to extend the assurances of its highest consideration to the Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.